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THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE





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March 2nd, 1921.

To the Librarian:

A monograph, entitled "The Altoviti-Aphrodite," has been prepared and printed privately, describing an antique statue of Aphrodite now in the gardens of my father's estate at Pocantico Hills, New York, and giving its history as far as known. The statue, because of its merit, has attracted the attention of critics in both Europe and America.

It has been suggested to me that this monograph might be of value to those interested in art and archaeology. Since only a limited number of copies is available, I am writing to inquire whether you would like one for your library. If so, I shall be glad to send to you a complimentary copy. The book measures 8 x 10 inches, with 24 illustrations.

Very truly,

John D. Rockefeller Jr.

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THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE



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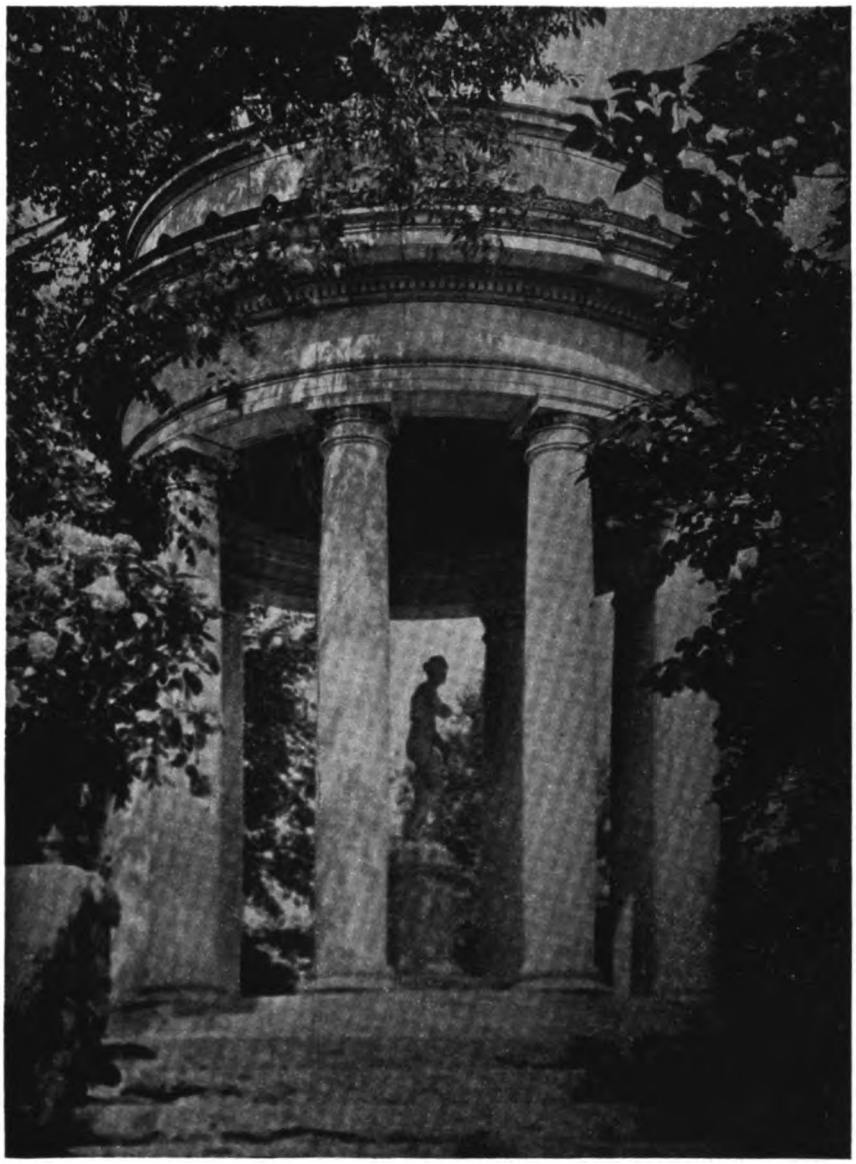
FOREWORD

THIS monograph on the Altoviti Aphrodite, which adorns the marble temple in the gardens of Mr. John D. Rockefeller at his country seat "Kijkuit" on the Hudson, has been compiled and edited from information and notes furnished by Mr. Charles de Kay of New York City, who was the first to point out the artistic merit of the Aphrodite and through whose efforts the statue was brought to the attention of critics in Europe and America.

WELLES BOSWORTH.

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THE APHRODITE IN THE MARBLE TEMPLE AT "KIJKUIT"

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THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE

I

TWO statues had long stood, how long we do not know, in the courtyard of the famous Palazzo Montalvo-Altoviti on the Borgo d'Albizzi in Florence. One of them, the Aphrodite which is the subject of this monograph, was esteemed by its owner as of little worth, while the other, attributed to Jan di Bologna, was highly prized. In 1892 Signor Gustavo Volterra, a dealer in antiques, walking down the street, noticed the two statues through the carriage archway. The Aphrodite stood at the rear of the courtyard against a stable wall, which had been decorated with frescoed fruits and flowers as a background by some sympathetic person who may have dimly realized the statue's beauty through the many coats of thick, rough paint with which it had long before been ignorantly and thoughtlessly covered.

Signor Volterra bought the statue for an insignificant sum, for neither he nor its owner, the Marchesa Matteucci, a descendant of the Montalvos, had a true appreciation of its beauty and value. With soap and water he removed the covering of paint from its surface. The Director of the Uffizi Gallery now wished to buy the statue, but for so low a sum that Signor Volterra, declining the offer, sent the marble to London. Thereupon it came into the posses-

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sion of Mr. Frederick Linton, who subsequently brought it to New York City with a collection of old paintings.

At that time the National Arts Club, then on West Thirty-fourth Street, was arranging a loan exhibition of old paintings. Hearing that there might be some objects worth exhibiting in Mr. Linton's collection, Mr. Charles de Kay went with him to the warehouse in which they were stored and after looking over the canvases learned that he possessed an old marble which some connoisseurs had pronounced a veritable antique. Mr. de Kay thus describes the impression the statue made upon him:

> "A glance at the figure made me think it was an old copy of the Medici Venus at Florence, but when the dim light gave place to full daylight I was immediately impressed by its extraordinary beauty. On examination I found that its arms, unlike the Medici's, were an integral part of the marble. It also had a base which bore marks of extreme antiquity; then, one of its hands, the right hand lightly touching the left breast, had upon it the remains of a strap decorated with reliefs to represent gold studs, bosses and cabuchon jewels, absolutely unknown to any of the marble statues of Venus which have come down to us. Aside then from the exquisite beauty of the face and figure, aside from the extraordinary perfection of the dolphin which rears itself as a support beside the legs, here was a statue which could not have been derived from any original so far discovered, and least of all from the Venus de Medici. Rather would it be more reasonable to believe that here was the original by Praxiteles from which Kleomenes of Athens made the famous Venus de Medici about 250 B. C., a century later."

Mr. Linton did not appreciate the value of his possession. Indeed, he had prized it so little that in 1893 he sent it by

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THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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freight to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, consigned to the Greek Department. The statue arrived long after the exhibition had opened. Hearing nothing of his loan, Mr. Linton requested a relative who was about to visit Chicago to inquire at the Greek Department whether it had arrived. There was no such department and the investigator by the merest chance learned that in the Japanese section there was an unaccounted-for case containing a marble statue. This proved to be the Aphrodite.

Later Mr. de Kay arranged to have the statue exhibited by the National Arts Club, and published an article in the *New York Times*, of which he was art critic, attributing the statue to Praxiteles. Considerable controversy and great public interest followed this publication. Throngs of art lovers came again and again to see the Aphrodite. Flowers were laid at its feet and poets were moved to verse. The late John La Farge suggested that it might be the work of Skopas. The Sunday papers dedicated special supplements to the subject. New York was enjoying a veritable art sensation.

Meanwhile it became known that the statue might be purchased, though for reasons of his own the owner would not at that time divulge where he had obtained it. Those disposed to recommend its purchase to private or public galleries were naturally mystified and made skeptical by this attitude. Had Mr. Linton frankly given the name of the dealer in Florence who had discovered the statue in the Palazzo Altoviti these suspicions would have been allayed.

In 1908 the Aphrodite became the property of two Eng-

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lish gentlemen, Sir Algernon Firth, Bart. and Mr. William Henry Aykroyd, who took it to London. At their request Mr. de Kay showed it to various artists, archæologists and connoisseurs in order to procure their opinion of its origin. Professor Lanteri of the South Kensington Schools confirmed Mr. de Kay's opinion that the statue was the work of the same hand which had modeled the Hermes at Olympia.

By special favor the statue was then placed in the British Museum beside a cast of the Medici Venus, in order that the differences between them might be readily observed. Many authorities agreed that the Montalvo-Altoviti might be the original from which "Kleomenes," if the name on the plinth can be accepted, had copied the Medici.

The British owners, now wishing to ascertain the judgment of French authorities, sent the Aphrodite to Paris where several archæologists came to view it. Auguste Rodin was profoundly stirred by its beauty, but, protesting that he was not an archæologist, declined to decide on its age or its authorship. Others were more explicit. M. Pottier, head of the department of antique terra cottas of the Louvre, thought it belonged to the first century before Christ; none considered it modern or Renaissance or Graeco-Roman; there appeared to be a general consensus of opinion however that it was Greek, antedating the Christian era.

Finally Mr. de Kay went to Florence, where, without disclosing his interest in the statue, he learned from Signor Volterra the details of his discovery and purchase of the Aphrodite.

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FRONT VIEW OF ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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THE VENUS DE MEDICI

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II

CAN the marble from which the Aphrodite was carved be identified? Was it cut from a block taken from the old quarries on Mount Pentelikos within sight of Athens, quarries long ago exhausted, from which came the material to build the Parthenon, or was it made from marble from the Island of Paros, also much used by Praxiteles and other Athenian sculptors?

It is characteristic of Pentelikan marble that its warm, yellowish tone when freshly quarried disappears to some degree provided the block is not exposed to the weather. Where the sun and rain beat upon its surface, as in parts of the ruined Parthenon, the yellow tone increases. This is due to the presence of iron, which at some points in the surface becomes visible in fine metallic spicules. Upon examining this statue one finds a general warm hue in the color of the marble, and curiously enough, in several places the metallic spicules are clearly visible. When the statue was exhibited at the National Arts Club there happened to be in New York certain quarrymen from Athens engaged in work on an altar in the Greek Church. They unhesitatingly expressed the opinion that the marble of the Aphrodite was from the ancient but now exhausted Pentelikan quarries which had been used in building the Parthenon.

The statue is clearly not of Parian marble. Although this is richer in tone than Carrara, it is whiter than

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Pentelikan and has a sharper, whiter glitter when fractured. The two materials have been much confused. Parian marble had attained such a reputation after the great age of sculpture that writers were prone to assume it without discrimination. Records of the time of Pliny and Pausanias often speak of Parian when the statue described, if an old one, was really Pentelikan. Indeed they can hardly be blamed for ignorance concerning a matter known only to quarry masters and sculptors. Even today in such collections as the Louvre and Vatican, one often comes across an old bit described in the catalogue as Parian which on close examination proves to be from the old quarry on Mount Pentelikos.

In the old statues, objects such as the trunk of a tree or a large jar or dolphin, which we find in the Altoviti marble and in the Venus de Medici, are generally placed near the figure. Their use is often misunderstood and falsely interpreted. Such treatment of the old marbles was practical in its origin, being intended to obviate the danger lest the heavy mass of the torso break the marble at the ankles of the figure.

As a familiar instance we have the Lykian Apollo in the Louvre, probably a Graeco-Roman copy of the original by Praxiteles, mentioned by Lucian as an ornament of the gymnasium at Athens. The figure rests one elbow on a tree trunk, from which, half way down, juts a strong branch as a support to the left thigh. The sculptor has used the trunk and branch not only for strengthening the statue but to accentuate the relaxed pose of the god.

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VIEW OF RIGHT SIDE OF ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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VIEW OF LEFT SIDE OF ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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Another statue in the Louvre, the famous Apollo the Lizard-killer, has two, if not three, branches springing from the trunk, all serving as firm supports for the marble figure. The Hermes at Olympia also has such a branch from the tree trunk, on the top of which reposes his left arm; the branch also helps support the infant Bacchus and the gathered mass of drapery.

In view of the need of support due to the inherent fragility of marble, sculptors are accustomed to place a block under the heel of a foot which is partially raised in the attitude of suspended movement. This is often seen in statues after the manner of Praxiteles. We find it before his day in The Athlete by Polykleitos as well as in his Satyr Pouring Wine in the Buoncampagni Museum at Rome; also in the Farnese Eros of the Louvre; and we must suppose it to have been used in the Hermes at Olympia, for the movement of the legs demands that one of the feet, which has been lost, should rest on the toes.

This supporting block under the heel of one foot is found in the Montalvo-Altoviti Aphrodite, as is also the other and principal support, which takes the form of a dolphin connected with the figure of the Goddess, its tail touching at another point, giving still further strength to the lower portion of the statue.

Praxiteles also considered carefully the character of the setting in which a work was to stand. A part which remained out of sight was not finished with the pains lavished upon the other parts. One notes for example the unfinished back of the Hermes with the infant Bacchus on his arm, which

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Pausanias, traveling in Greece in the second century after Christ, saw in the Heraion at Olympia. Evidently that masterpiece was originally intended for a niche, having been subsequently transferred to the Heraion when that temple became a museum.

The Venus de Milo is another example of a niche statue with unfinished back. Very different is the Altoviti Aphrodite, in which the back is a marvel of beauty. Here was a goddess to be admired from all sides, like the far-famed Knidian Aphrodite by Praxiteles.



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THE HERMES BY PRAXITELES

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PRAXITELES' "MARBLE FAUN"

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III

WHEN this statue was chiseled from the block, the artist was not disturbed by the fact that the color of the marble did not run evenly and that a lighter tone appeared obliquely across and down the torso. The modern sculptor, precluded from painting his statues, regards such a defect as prohibitive and seeks a flawless block. The Renaissance as a rule pursued the same course, making, however, an occasional exception in the case of a portrait bust or religious statue of coarser stone and terra cotta. But the ancients felt the hard cold stone to be unsympathetic and therefore covered it with what the Greeks called γανώσις and the Latins *circumlitio*, a varnish or polish of colored wax and oil rubbed into the marble, which took on the appearance of flesh or ivory.

To cite one or two examples: There is in the British Museum a bust which has retained some of its original coloring, a rosy hue of lips and cheeks, a blue tone of the iris. And when the Hermes was first found at Olympia it had faint traces of color in the hair and drapery, while on the sandal the color was very distinct. Colors have survived better on many Tanagra figurines, perhaps because of the roughness of the terra cotta surfaces.

The painting of sculpture was also common during the middle ages, and this method of treatment still persists in

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the painted images of the Roman Catholic churches today.

Ancient statues were further ornamented with actual golden armlets (in our Aphrodite the left arm has a circular depression to hold such an armlet in place); with golden gem-set pendants in the ears (the ears of this statue are bored for this purpose); and in other ways by realistic touches, such as the placing of a golden fillet across the hair and the sprinkling of the tinted locks with powdered gold.

At the time when statues of gods and goddesses were carved by the greatest sculptors the world has produced, the painter who added the finishing touches of color had to be an artist of consummate skill. It was his task to consider the light which was to illumine the figure, the background against which it was to stand, the distance from which it was to be seen by the worshippers at the outer gates. He must consider too the decorations to be added in drapery, gold, ivory or jewels.

Goldsmiths as well as painters were employed to make the ornaments with which the statues were to be adorned. No artist was held too great to render such services, not even the proud Parrhasios, who, on losing a competition to paint a picture of Ajax, remarked that he cared very little for his own defeat, but was sorry for Ajax who was thus doomed to be defeated a second time.



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DETAIL OF THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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THE VENUS DE MILO

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IV

THE discovery of the Altoviti Aphrodite, as described in the first section of this narrative, did not escape the attention of the Florentines. Professor L. A. Milani made it the subject of a report included in a volume prepared in honor of the archæologist Wolfgang Helbig, called Strena Helbigiana, which was published by Teubner in Leipzig in 1890.

On measuring the arms of the statue Professor Milani found that they coincided exactly with the measurements of the arms added to the Venus de Medici in the seventeenth century, when that statue was brought to Florence from Rome. Perhaps Ercole Ferrata, the sculptor who restored the Medici, had this statue before him in the collection of the Montalvos.

Professor Milani thought the decorative strap on the hand was an armlet. Had he examined the ends behind the hand, he surely would have realized that the object was not meant for an armlet, and further, that the circular depression on the upper arm would not have fitted the little strap in question. This leads us to a more detailed consideration of an interesting theme, the "kestos" of Aphrodite.

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V

EACH of the divinities of Olympus had his or her symbol or attribute: Zeus his thunderbolt, Poseidon his trident, Hera a sceptre ending in a cuckoo, Ares his sword, Pallas Athene her spear, Hermes his serpent-entwined caduceus, Herakles his club and lion skin, Apollo his bow, cithara or lyre.

Aphrodite has her kestos, that embroidered strap or little girdle, which, before the fashion of the broad girdle, ran below the breasts and, tapering toward the ends, was fastened right and left to the brooches on the shoulders. This was the intimate and decorated object lying half hidden in the bosom of a girl, which she gave only to the man she loved and meant to marry. The wearing of the kestos was in all probability out of fashion even in the time of Praxiteles, but it was never forgotten by the poets of Greece and Rome, because the Iliad kept it ever in their minds.

The kestos of Aphrodite was used as a symbol; a whole train of love meanings attached to it long after the Greek women had ceased to make it a part of their attire. Perhaps here lies the reason why the kestos had not been seen in a life-size marble statue before the Altoviti Venus was discovered and why even then its meaning was at first misunderstood.

The kestos can be found in certain small bronzes in the British Museum which are catalogued as coming from

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Egypt. A few terra cottas also show it. But these instances are so rare that it is not to be wondered at, that the allusions to the kestos in Homer and Martial have been overlooked by writers of the past.

Homer first alludes to the kestos as follows:

> Then with crafty purposes the lady Hera answered her: 'Give me now Love and Desire wherewith thou dost overcome all the Immortals and mortal men, for I am going to visit the limits of the bountiful Earth, and Okeanos, father of the Gods, and mother Tethys, who reared me well and nourished me in their halls, having taken me from Rhea when far-seeing Zeus imprisoned Kronos beneath the earth and the unvintaged sea. Them am I going to visit, and their endless strife will I loose, for already this long time they hold apart from each other, apart from Love and the marriage bed, since wrath hath settled in their hearts. If with words I might persuade their hearts and bring them back to love and the marriage bed, ever should I be called dear to them and worshipful.'
>
> Then laughter-loving Aphrodite answered her again: 'It may not be, nor seemly were it to deny that thou askest, for thou sleepest in the arms of Zeus, the chief of the Gods.'
>
> Therewith from her breast she loosed the broidered girdle (*kestos himas*) fair wrought, wherein are all her enchantments; therein are love and desire and loving converse, that steals the wits even of the wise. This girdle she laid in her hands and spoke and said: 'Lo now, take this girdle and lay it in thy bosom, this fair-wrought girdle, wherein all things are fashioned; methinks thou wilt not return with that unaccomplished which in thy heart thou desirest.'
>
> So spake she and the ox-eyed lady Hera smiled, and smiling laid up the zone within her breast.

Iliad, Butcher and Lang's translation, Book XIV.

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HAND OF ALTOVITI STATUE SHOWING KESTOS BEFORE RESTORATION

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LEFT HAND OF THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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The inference seems clear that the fair wrought embroidered strap (*kestos himas poikilos*) instead of being a zone or girdle as Lang translates it, was a small object which Aphrodite unfastened from her breast and Hera placed in her own bosom. It may have been the prototype of the zone girdle of later days, but at the time when the Iliad was first sung it was a small, embroidered, perfumed and gem-studded breast ornament.

Lucian speaks of it as a small object which Aphrodite hardly misses from her breast when the infant Hermes purloins it. Apollo says to Hephaistos in Dialogues of the Gods:

> "Ah, and you don't know what a glib young chatterbox he is; and, if he has his way, he is to be our errand-boy. Yesterday he challenged Eros, tripped up his heels somehow, and had him on his back in a twinkling. Before the applause was over he had taken the opportunity of a congratulatory hug from Aphrodite to steal her kestos; Zeus had not done laughing before the sceptre was gone. If the thunder-bolt had not been too heavy, and very hot, he would have made away with that too."
>
> Translation by H. W. and F. G. Fowler. Vol. I.

He employs it again in an amusing fashion in one of his Dialogues of the Gods in the scene of the judgment of Paris. The dramatis personae are Hera, Pallas Athene, Aphrodite, Hermes as personal courier of the goddesses, and Paris, the shepherd prince. Hera has disrobed and has been surveyed:

> *Paris:* "Aphrodite, will you also prepare?"
> *Athene:* "O, Paris, make her remove that kestos, there is

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magic in it; she will bewitch you. She ought to present herself unadorned."

Paris: "You are right about the kestos, it must go."

Aphrodite: "Ah then, Athene; take off that helmet and show your head bare, instead of trying to intimidate the judge with that waving plume. I suppose you are afraid the color of your eyes may be noticed, without their formidable surroundings."

Athene: "Here is my helmet."

Aphrodite: "And here is my kestos."

Hera: "Now then."

Paris: "God of wonders! What loveliness is here! O, rapture! How exquisite these maiden charms! How dazzling the majesty of Heaven's true queen! And O, how sweet, how enthralling is Aphrodite's smile! 'Tis too much, too much for happiness. But perhaps it would be well for me to view each in detail; for as yet I doubt, and know not where to look; my eyes are drawn all ways at once."

Translation by H. W. and F. G. Fowler. Vol. I. See appendix herewith.

In the object on the right hand of this statue, there remained two parts of the loop; the central portion has now been restored by the sculptor F. M. L. Tonetti. In the original one sees alternate square and round bosses indicating gold and begemmed adornments. The two ends of this strap fall behind the hand and are found to taper, as if for tieing. This is the kestos.

An epigram by M. Valerius Martialis, the Roman-Spaniard of the first century A. D., on a statue of Julia of the house of the Cæsars, contains an allusion to the kestos and proves moreover that all sculptors had not neglected to display the talisman four centuries after Praxiteles:

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Who would not imagine, O Julia, that you were the work of the chisel of Pheidias or a marvel of the art of Pallas Athene? From the white Lydian marble, as if speaking, a live and liquid expression shines through thy serene face. Thy smooth hand toys with the Acidalian knot (the kestos) which, O poor little Cupid, has been snatched from thy neck! In order that the loves of Mars and high thundering Jove shall be renewed, Juno and Venus herself may borrow from thee thy kestos."

Translation by C. de Kay.

The allusion to snatching the kestos from the neck of Cupid may be understood from certain engraved gems which show Eros standing by Aphrodite with the kestos in his hand, as if he had stolen and was returning it to his mother in a sportive, infantile fashion.

The small bronzes mentioned above as in the British Museum (there is a third in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris) in which the goddess holds the kestos in her hand doubled up as if to strike someone with it, are sufficiently explained by another epigram of Martial's on the marriage of the poet Stella to Ianthis. Venus whispers in the ear of Ianthis, just wedded to her Stella:

"Oft have I myself in rage beaten lascivious Mars whilst he wandered about, inconstant, before the portals opened to our legitimate spousals. But since he became mine he has never injured me through a rival. Juno might well desire that Jupiter should be so constant!" Thus spake she and struck the husband (Stella) with the mystic strap (the kestos).

Translation by C. de Kay.

These quotations from Homer, Lucian and Martial, and the menacing attitude of the little bronzes mentioned, are enough to warrant one in saying that by the old Greeks the

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SIDE VIEW OF ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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kestos was considered the weapon of Aphrodite, stronger than the spear of Ares or the club of Herakles because it was a magic weapon like the caduceus of Hermes.

But if one wishes to see the kestos displayed at full length, with indications of its decorations of alternate circles and crosses, one must consult the Reports of the German Archæological Institute in Athens for 1878, where K. D. Mulonas has described in modern Greek an old bronze with figures engraved upon it. Aphrodite in a long chiton with a girdle about her waist sits in profile at the left; Hermes, nude, sits opposite at the right, in profile, holding his serpentine herald's wand. Between them, but above, stands Eros, nude, with very large wings, facing the observer. He holds with spread arms the two ends of a strap decorated toward the middle with alternating circles and crosses, representing jewels and round gold bosses. One tapering end hangs for tieing. Mr. Mulonas points out that this is the γνώστον ἠρότικον σύμβολον, ταίνια, "the well-known symbol of love, the ταίνια."

A gold ring in the British Museum which Furtwaengler reproduces in his Antike Gemmen IX, 47 shows Aphrodite completely nude resting her left elbow on a fluted column which holds her drapery. She wears anklets and a bracelet on the upper left arm. Her weight is supported on the right leg while the left is flexed. Her face is turned to the right in the rhythmic way. She holds out her right arm with palm downward, while a dove rests on the back of this extended hand. Underneath stands a little winged Eros, extending to his mother her kestos ornamented with

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jewels. This is a fine intaglio of the fourth century and shows the influence of Praxiteles in the droop of the head and the restful relaxed pose.

In an agate intaglio belonging to a Duke of Wurtemberg we see Eros kneeling with his back to a column and holding the kestos in his right hand. Other examples of the kestos in paintings and sculpture from the sixth century onward will undoubtedly be found, now that attention has been called to the talisman.

Another epigram of Martial reads: "Tie round thy neck, O boy, the purest of loves, the kestos, still warm from the bosom of Venus."

Another of the same sort reads: "Accept the kestos impregnated with the nectar of Venus; this same symbol inflamed Jupiter with love."

So we find that Martial, the Hispano-Roman poet of the first, and Lucian, the Ionian Greek writer of the second century after Christ, knew perfectly that the kestos was neither zone nor girdle, but a small breast ornament, as clearly indicated in the Iliad.

The sculptor of a completely nude Aphrodite had to face several problems if he wished to please the priests and priestesses of the goddess. He could not evade the necessity of showing this most important of all her attributes, any more than he could model Apollo without his bow or his lyre, or Hermes without his caduceus. There was the dolphin, to be sure, and for Aphrodite there might

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also be the swan or the dove, but how adjust the kestos without some drapery? The sculptor of the Altoviti conceived the innovation of throwing it over the right hand in a careless manner, as if it were an object too precious and important to be put aside with drapery.

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BACK VIEW OF THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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VI

THE episode in the career of Aphrodite which seems to be illustrated by the Altoviti statue can scarcely be other than her *land-nama*, her appearance at Kythera after her magical birth from the foam of the sea. There is no drapery at all. She is attended by the dolphin, which, though warm-blooded, was yet a symbol of the sea, and fabled once to have been a human being. Stories have been told of its return by night in human form to seek human love. Aphrodite at her first splendid appearance carries nothing but her talisman of Love, the *kestos himas* or bejewelled band. It is enough; for we have a warrant of its limitless inclusiveness from her own lips:

> Τῇ νῦν, τοῦτον ἱμάντα τεῷ ἐγκάτθεο κόλπῳ.
> Ποικίλον, ᾧ ἔνι πάντα τετεύχαται
>
> Lo now, take this girdle and lay it up in thy bosom.
> This fair-wrought (or many-colored) girdle *wherein all things are fashioned.*
> [Iliad XIV 219.—Translation of Lang, Leaf and Myers].

Further confirmation of this episode has been found by some observers in one detail of the little marble platform, an integral part of the original block, from which the dolphin rears himself so joyously. Unlike the plinth of other surviving marbles, this one seems to bear an indication of fine waves like the surface of sand under the impulse of

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gentle ripples. This would denote the landing of Aphrodite foam-fashioned "born from the sea."

The ripples traced on the stand of this statue, the depression on the arm to hold the armlet, and the kestos found on the hand, seem in themselves to set the date of the statue well back into the fourth century, about 380 B. C., a date corresponding to the early years of Praxiteles.

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THE ALTOVITI APHRODITE BEFORE RESTORATION
OF THE FINGERS AND KESTOS

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BACK VIEW OF ALTOVITI APHRODITE SHOWING FACE IN PROFILE

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VII

THE sculptor Praxiteles may in his day have been criticised for departing from the severe majesty of Polykleitos of Argos and Pheidias of Athens in his treatment of religious effigies; but the sweetness and grace, the easy pose and delicate charm of his statues soon made his work the delight of the cultivated public.

He came of a family of sculptors and his sons and nephews carried on his art. Though he was far from throwing tradition to the winds, and though he often seems to follow Polykleitos and his own elder brother, Kephisodotos, yet he left a deep stamp of his own individuality on Greek sculpture.

Cicero speaks of Praxitelean heads, *Praxitelia capita*. There was something in the pose, shape and expression of the heads of his statues which clearly marked them from those of other sculptors of and near his time. This personal trait makes it possible to distinguish copies of lost originals, in which the copyist has utterly failed to approach the master, from other copies after other men.

The Aphrodite of Arles, the Artemis of Gabii, the Apollo Lizard-killer and Lykian Apollo in the Louvre, the Artemis of Kition at Vienna, the head of Aphrodite at Toulouse, the Aphrodite of Knidos and the Eros of Thespiai at the Vatican, and the Satyr at Rest in the Capitoline Museum at Rome, are copies which owe their attribution

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to Praxiteles largely to the pensive droop of the head, a peculiar modeling of the under eyelids, the disposition of the hair and the modeling of the forehead, at least in those male heads which do not represent boys.

With respect to the hair, there is more variety in the masculine than the feminine heads. The short crisp tufted locks of the Hermes at Olympia are somewhat similar in treatment to the hair of the Young Herakles in the British Museum; but how very different is the hair of the Satyr Pouring Wine in the Buoncampagni Museum! and how different again is that of the Farnese Eros in the Louvre! The two latter belong to his early period. Still another way of rendering long curling locks is seen in the Eros of Thespiai at the Vatican, and singular is the mass of hair coming low on the brow of the Satyr at Rest, almost like a wig.

The arrangement of the hair in the Altoviti Aphrodite is like that in the Aphrodite of Arles, rippling tresses parted in the middle and brought together at the back in a knot. The ripples are crossed by a fillet which goes twice around the head, the bands lying several inches apart. The same rendering of the hair is seen in the Aphrodite of Knidos of the Vatican and in the head at Toulouse.

The eyes of this Aphrodite have the oft-described dreamy look of Praxitelean heads, somewhat deeply set, as they are, under clear-cut brows, inclining downwards and having the unobtrusive lower lids that throw no shadows, differing thus from the lower lids in statues made before Praxiteles. This is perhaps the celebrated "liquid" or "swimming"

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expression reported by the ancients in the Aphrodite of Knidos, for example. The dreamy or swimming effect is a trait of Praxiteles. None before him and few after him attained to this subtle restful gaze, this look of one aloof.

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THE CAPITOLINE VENUS AT ROME
This statue is in the Museum in the Capitol at Rome. Late variant on the Knidian Aphrodite by Praxiteles

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BACK OF THE CAPITOLINE VENUS AT ROME

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VIII

IN the delicacy of his modeling Praxiteles was marvelous. This Aphrodite shows to one familiar with his works certain points of detail characteristic of him: the neck, with the slight circular depressions called collier de Vénus, the mouth with its slightly parted lips and deeply chiseled corners, the dimple in the chin, and the angle made by the plane of the eyes with the eye-sockets, the bridge of the nose, the forehead just above the brows with its transverse depression, and the method used to denote the hair line around the forehead.

Most of the statues which descend from originals by Praxiteles show the head inclined and the face turned toward that side on which the greater weight of the body is sustained by the unflexed leg. In the Altoviti Venus it is the left leg that sustains the weight and it is toward the left that her face is turned. This apparently insignificant detail is of the greatest importance. It is part of the rhythm and harmony which Praxiteles certainly did not originate but which he carried to more exquisite perfection than any of his great predecessors and fellow-masters.

In order to realize the secret of the inner rhythm of a statue, which may be called the rhythm of rest, one has merely to imagine the face of this figure turned the other way. At once there is discord, uneasiness. The sure inner harmony of head and face is seen in the Diadoumenos of

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Polykleitos, in the Eirené and Infant Ploutos of Kephisodotos and in the earlier and mid-life works of their follower Praxiteles, in his Hermes at Olympia, in the Satyr Pouring Wine, in the Farnese Eros and the Eros of Thespiai, in the Aphrodite of Arles and the Artemis of Gabii.

Pliny reports that though Praxiteles wrought also in bronze, his marble statues were more famous. The bronze worker stands revealed in one part of this statue, namely, the symbolic sporting dolphin. The tail of the dolphin is wrought so thin and projects so far from the side of the goddess that one marvels at the daring of the sculptor. Lightly struck, it sings reverberatingly with a sound as of metal. And while the Hermes at Olympia and the Aphrodite of Milo at Paris are not entirely chiseled from one block, in the Altoviti the arms, the head, the plinth, the dolphin, are all of the same piece of marble.



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THE APHRODITE WITH DOLPHIN
Another Variant on the Praxitelean Aphrodite. Later than the Medici

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IX

EXTRAORDINARY indeed is the good fortune that has preserved this statue almost entire for all these years! It has lost only several of the fingers and the middle section of the kestos, which Mr. Tonetti has skilfully restored. Its excellent condition indicates, we may believe, that it never suffered shipwreck, and was always admired enough to cause its owners to hide it during wars and that it was never exposed to sun, rain and frost. What saved it during the last few centuries was the lucky coatings of paint which dimmed its beauty and led its owners to think that it had little or no market value. Doubtless it has long passed for a copy of the Medici.

That it may have been in Florence when the Medici statue was brought from Rome and restored has been already noted. But that it was in Florence several centuries earlier, perhaps before the Altovitis owned it, is at least highly probable, and for this reason: Benvenuto da Imola, the first person to give readings on Dante, commenting on a mention which Dante had made of Polykleitos in his Purgatorio, has a note to the effect that he, Benvenuto, had seen in a private house in Florence a wonderful nude statue of Aphrodite attributed to this same Polykleitos. There are points in the Altoviti goddess, as previously mentioned, which prove that the young sculptor Praxiteles was under the influence of Polykleitos, as were also his father and elder brother,

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Kephisodotos. In his later work this influence became weaker. The men of the middle ages knew Praxiteles through copies by late Greeks or Graeco-Romans and obviously could have known nothing of his early work from actual originals. Hence the attribution.

These inferences, if correct, would account for it at Florence as far back as the fourteenth century, in which case it has for five centuries been in private hands, perhaps passing down by bequest, or seized, together with other family treasures, by some tyrant like Cosimo de Medici, who laid a heavy hand on the possessions of his political foes.

Back of that one cannot go. And yet there is so much unexplored material in the annals of Florentine families that it would not be surprising if some clew were still to be discovered which would show this marble in the lists of antiquities belonging to one or more of them during these five hundred years.

As a composition this statue is superior to any work by Praxiteles so far known. It is equally beautiful from every point of view. It is more rounded and compact. The "holes in the composition," the interstices between leg and leg, between leg and dolphin, present the loveliest lines imaginable. The turn of the head, its droop, the flexure of the leg, all combine to impress one with a tender pensive air of rest and suspended easy motion.

To appreciate the superiority of this figure to the famous Aphrodite of Knidos it is only necessary to look at that statue from the side of the water-jar and drapery, and note how the jar and drapery interfere with the view of the lower

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part of the figure, as compared with the Altoviti marble seen from the side of the dolphin, where nothing is lost.

Contrary to the habit of many workmen in the early times, the sculptor of this statue was not careless when modeling a minor part or an adjunct. The dolphin here has an individuality of its own. It might have been done by the famous animalist Myron, so alive is the creature. There is even a touch of the humorous in its eyes. And how exquisite is the sense of proportion! The tail reaches just to the right height, beside and a little behind the upper left leg of the figure. The whole mass of the dolphin is so contrived as to give breadth and bulk to the lower part of the composition as a whole, such as draped statues obtain by the fall of a robe. We should imagine the dolphin as once ornamented in tones of silver, green and gold.

It is noteworthy that this dolphin was never saddled with one or more little Cupids, like the sea beast that accompanies the Medici. Note also that when one regards the Medici from the back there is a tree trunk and a dolphin which destroy that beautiful view from the rear so greatly admired in this marble.

The simplicity of the Altoviti compared with the crowded interference observed in the Medici, speaks eloquently for its originality. Critics who have carefully compared the two marbles concur in placing the Montalvo-Altoviti far ahead of the Medici in regard to composition, grace and nobility of aspect.

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COPY OF THE VENUS OF KNIDOS AT ROME

Greco-Roman adaptation of the Knidian Aphrodite by Praxiteles. This variant on the Aphrodite by Praxiteles, once in Knidos, Asia-Minor, is in the Vatican. It represents Aphrodite disrobing before Paris to gain the prize. The drapery round the legs is of tin, painted to look like marble.

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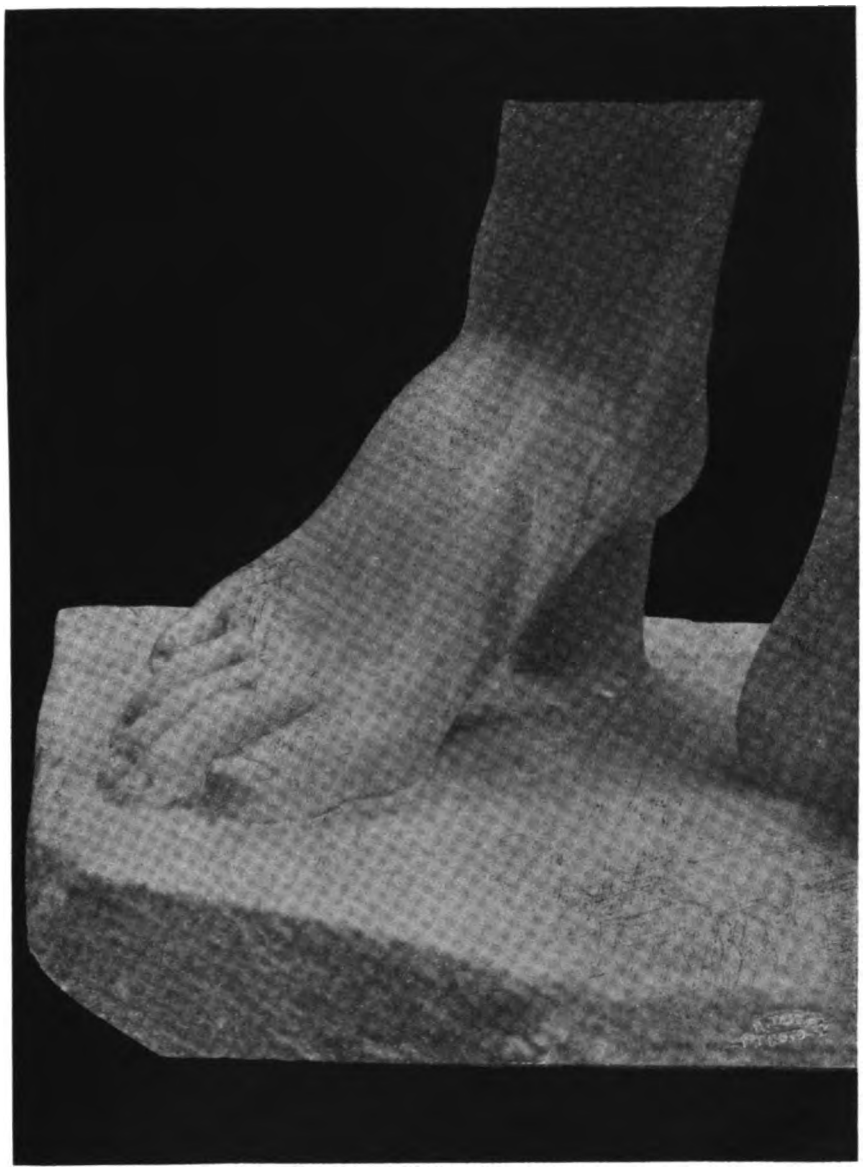
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THE slight suggestion of Polykleitos in the pose of the Altoviti marble and the archaic traits already mentioned, the ripple marks on the top of the plinth, the square block under the uplifted right heel, the extraordinary beauty of the dolphin, the channel on the upper left arm for a bracelet, the kestos on the right hand, the ears pierced for earrings: these indicate that the sculptor consulted tradition and arranged his statue for decoration to suit the demands of idol-worshippers, and suggest that it is an early work belonging somewhere between 370 and 365 B. C.

It may well be that the famous Phryne was the model for the statue. We know that Praxiteles promised Phryne whichever of his statues she might choose and likewise that she, having the wit to know that his choice would be better than hers, employed stratagem to make sure of obtaining the best. An Eros by Praxiteles which she gave to the temple at Thespiai was still there in the time of Pausanias. Since gifts from Phryne were there in the same temple, an Aphrodite and a portrait statue of herself, probably the Eros stood between the two. As Phryne was considered a priestess of Aphrodite, there was nothing extraordinary in the collocation of the goddess and her priestess. It would have been natural that the first attempt by Praxiteles under the inspiration of Phryne's beauty

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FOOT OF ALTOVITI APHRODITE

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should go to Phryne's birthplace and that Phryne herself should offer it. Phryne's life and her relations with Praxiteles are well known.

The clean cut legs of the Altoviti seem to fit the story of Phryne's youth passed in the open air. The feet are not too small; they are made to carry an athletic maiden. Noticeable are the small size of the little toes and the length of the second toe. These are feet that were not constrained. The torso was never distorted by any restraining bands. She is a full-grown woman and yet girlish withal. It is not impossible that the Aphrodite at Thespiai may have been this particular marble of the Altovitis which found its way to Italy, as did so many hundred others.

The suave lines of the shoulders of the Altoviti marble have been greatly admired, and, even more, the exquisite modeling of the lower back. Indeed there can be no back more beautiful; the Melos and the Medici are not comparable to it in this respect.

The gesture of the two hands has been the source of frequent errors. To worshippers, from the days of Homer to those of Praxiteles, Aphrodite was a goddess of generation. She had no false modesty to preserve. The expression of the Medici Venus suggests bashfulness and concealment. Quite the contrary, this statue. The goddess gazes serene and unabashed, a deity of generation, revealing herself to mankind at her birth from the sea, while the two hands indicate by their sovereign sweep inward the two great organs of maternity, the womb where man is created and the breast where he is nourished, the majestic gesture of Venus

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Genetrix. It suggests only calmness, purity and nobility.

Surviving examples of ancient sculpture belonging to the best Greek epoch are so few that we must count the advent of the Altoviti Aphrodite to America as rare good fortune. We have proposed in these pages a high origin for it and believe the attribution rests on solid grounds; but whether Praxiteles fashioned the statue or not, we surely have in the statue an example of Greek sculpture of the great period and the first excellence.

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FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

GREEK TERRA COTTA POWDER BOX

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APPENDIX

Page 15. This scene is depicted on an Ionic vase in Munich found in the Etruscan city of Caere. Aphrodite is represented holding the kestos in her left hand.

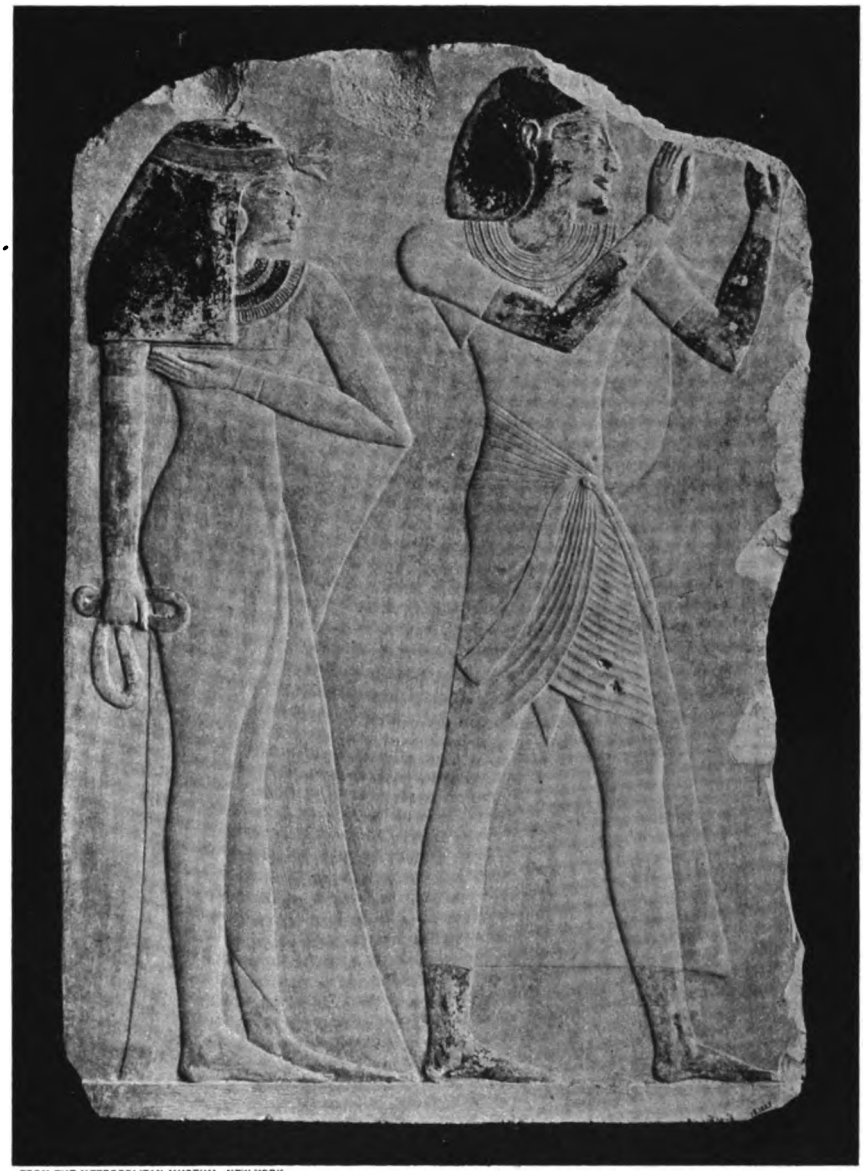
Letter from Mr. de Kay to Mr. Bosworth

"The Altoviti Aphrodite continues to interest me. You remember the kestos—the strap thrown over the right hand, which some people hastily took for a necklace or armlet? You recall that, so far, we have this attribute of Venus in no other marble, although I have found it in the hands of bronze statuettes of Venus in Paris and London. You may also have noted in *The Art World* for February, 1917 (page 336) how the idea of the love-throwing powers of the kestos may have been mixed up with the magic attributed to the root of the mandragora plant, so that the writer, an English professor, conjectures that in primitive Greece—say before Homer—the women concealed bits of the mandragora inside the kestos which they wore just below the breast? Well, I have discovered the kestos, this embryo of the girdle and corset, in certain objects at the Metropolitan Museum. One is a painting on a vase from Greece in which Paris is judging the three goddesses, and Cupid, standing apart with his mother, hands the kestos to Aphrodite.

The others are Egyptian, not Greek, and show for the thousandth time how right Herodotus was in tracing many religious ideas of Greece to an Egyptian origin. Here are portraits of two Egyptian couples, husband and wife, belonging to one of the early

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FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

EGYPTIAN RELIEF SHOWING KESTOS IN HAND OF WOMAN

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FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

EGYPTIAN GROUP SHOWING KESTOS IN LEFT HAND OF WIFE

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dynasties. In each case the wife holds the kestos in her hand. I do not believe that a sculptor of this early period in Egypt would have dared to put that piece of feminine attire in the hands of a woman unless the object had been one of some high religious import. So we find the origin of the magic quality of the Kestos in Egypt very early; and as late as the Ptolemies we see the idea still alive."

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